

BOARD OF EQUALIZATION
PROPERTY TAX RULES

Division 1. State Board of Equalization-Property Tax
Chapter 2. Assessment
Article 3. Exemptions and Immunities

Rule 137. Application of the Welfare Exemption to Property Used for Housing.

Authority: Section 15606(c), Government Code.

Reference: Sections 214, 214.01, 214.1., 214.2, 254, 254.5 and 255, Revenue and Taxation Code; and Article XIII, Sections (4)b and (5), California Constitution.

(a) Housing and related facilities owned and used by community chests, funds, foundations or corporations organized and operated for religious, hospital, scientific or charitable purposes is eligible for the welfare exemption from property taxation as provided in Revenue and Taxation Code section 214. A single uniform statewide standard shall be used to determine whether the welfare exemption applies to housing and related facilities owned and used by qualified organizations. The standard is whether the use of the property by the organization for housing and related facilities is a use that is incidental to and reasonably necessary for the accomplishment of the exempt purposes of the organization. For purposes of applying the uniform statewide standard, the phrase "Use of property that is incidental to and reasonably necessary for the accomplishment of the exempt purposes of the organization" includes the use of property that is institutionally necessary for the operation of the organization as provided in subdivision (i) of section 214 of the Revenue and Taxation Code.

(b) For purposes of determining whether property used for housing and related facilities is eligible for the welfare exemption, the terms "incidental to and reasonably necessary for" and "institutionally necessary" are identical and interchangeable; the term "institutionally necessary" means and includes "incidental to and reasonably necessary for" and vice versa. No distinctions in application of the welfare exemption to housing and related facilities shall be based on any difference or divergence between the terms.

(c) For purposes of determining eligibility for the welfare exemption, it is the use of the housing and related facilities by the organization owning the property that is to be considered, not the use by the occupants. If the organization's use of the property is incidental to and reasonably necessary for the accomplishment of the organization's exempt purposes, the property is eligible for exemption. The occupant's use for personal or residential purposes is secondary to the organization's primary exempt purpose and shall not disqualify the property from exemption either in whole or in part.

(d) The location of the property in relation to other property owned and used by the exempt organization is irrelevant to the application of the exemption. It is the use of the property by the organization which is the determining factor. The fact that the housing is located on property in a remote area may be considered in determining whether the housing is incidental to and reasonably necessary for the operation of the organization.

(e) Examples: The following examples illustrate the application of the welfare exemption to housing and related facilities

Example No. 1: The two-story building with seven completely-furnished apartments is used exclusively to provide temporary low-cost housing to missionaries, clergy, other religious workers and their families on furlough status while in the United States. The articles of incorporation of the nonprofit religious corporation which owns and operates the property provide that its purpose is to provide housing for missionaries, clergymen, other religious workers and their families who work in establishing and furthering its religious purposes throughout the world. This housing is exempt as a facility incidental to and reasonably necessary for the accomplishment of the church's religious and charitable purposes.

Example No. 2: The property of a private school is used to provide board and housing to students. Although most of the school's students were day students, some students relied upon the school for board and lodging. These services provided by the school are reasonably related to the exempt educational activity, and are an exempt use of the property within the school's educational purpose.

Rule 137 (Contd.)

Example No. 3: Property owned by a nonprofit corporation is used for housing and related facilities for persons who assemble two weeks each year for purposes of religious instruction and worship. The residential facilities are exempt as within the organization's religious purpose. Housing for caretakers or maintenance workers required to reside at the religious conclave facility is exempt as institutionally necessary.

Example No. 4: A nonprofit religious organization owns housing which it provides to its ministers and their families. Organizational documents require the church to provide housing as part of a system that allows the organization flexibility in assigning the clergy, aids in recruiting and keeping the clergy and provides the clergy with privacy and respite. The property also is used regularly for church functions such as youth meetings and organizational committee meetings. The church's use of its property to provide housing for its clergy is exempt as reasonably necessary for the furtherance of its religious purpose.

Example No. 5: The primary missionary activity of a nonprofit religious organization is to publish and disseminate its religious literature to the general public. The organization owns a complex consisting of a temple and six apartment buildings that provide work areas for about 250 devotees, about one-half of whom are involved in the publishing and distribution of the organization's religious books and magazines. The work areas are frequently used at night as sleeping areas since most of the devotees live in the rooms in which they work. The devotees follow a seven-hour daily regimen of communal and individual daily prayers, meditations, chanting, and attendance at temple services and observe a strict diet which necessitates living in the temple complex. Property used for housing the devotees in the temple complex is exempt as reasonably necessary for the fulfillment of the organization's religious objectives.

History: Adopted October 6, 1999, effective December 31, 1999.